

METAPHYSICS AND THE *INTELLECTUS FIDEI*
IN TRINITARIAN THEOLOGY:
THE CASE OF ST. THOMAS AQUINAS

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In his encyclical letter, *Fides et Ratio* (1998), Pope John Paul II writes that theology, as *scientia fidei*, is ordered according to a twofold methodological principle: the *auditus fidei* and the *intellectus fidei*¹. He teaches that the understanding of faith (*intellectus fidei*) expounds the truth of divine revelation insofar as it grasps the logical and conceptual structure of the propositions of the Church's teaching and insofar as it brings to light the salvific meaning of these propositions². This exposition, however, proper to the *intellectus fidei*, requires the contribution of metaphysics:

Metaphysics thus plays an essential role of mediation in theological research. A theology without a metaphysical horizon could not move beyond an analysis of religious experience, nor would it allow the *intellectus fidei* to give a coherent account of the universal and transcendent value of revealed truth³.

The *intellectus fidei* turns to metaphysics which bases itself on the act of being and "which views reality in its ontological, causal and communicative structures". It is this type of metaphysics that allows a full and comprehensive openness (*patefactio*) to reality as a whole and brings man to God⁴. In particular, John Paul II highlights five examples of the relationship between metaphysics and dogmatic theology. Metaphysics is involved in: our language about God (*sermo de Deo*); the explanation of the personal relations within the Trinity; our understanding of God's creative action in the world; the articulation of the relationship or bond (*necessitudo*) between God and man; the dogma of Christ's identity as true God and man⁵. Consequently, dogmatic theology is seen to presuppose philosophical anthropology and, more radically, metaphysics⁶.

Fourteen years after the promulgation of *Fides et Ratio*, the International Theological Commission published a document entitled: "Theology Today: Perspectives, Principles, and Criteria" (2012). The document maintains that the *intellectus fidei* becomes theology "when the believer undertakes to present the content of the Christian mystery in a rational and scientific way"⁷. Theology, as *scientia*

¹ See JOHN PAUL II, *Fides et Ratio*, n. 65: "Theologia veluti scientia fidei ordinatur duobus statutis principiis methodologicis, quae sunt: *auditus fidei* et *intellectus fidei*".

² See JOHN PAUL II, *Fides et Ratio*, n. 66.

³ JOHN PAUL II, *Fides et Ratio*, n. 83: "Quocirca metaphysica existit tamquam quaedam intercessio praestans in theologica inquisitione. Theologia quidem, prospectu metaphysico destituta, ultra experientiae religiosae investigationem progredi non poterit neque permittere ut intellectus fidei congruenter universalem veritatis revelatae transcendentemque vim significet". See also n. 97: "*intellectus fidei* postulat ut philosophia essendi partes quae in primis sinant ut *theologia dogmatica* consentaneo modo expleat sua munia".

⁴ See JOHN PAUL II, *Fides et Ratio*, n. 97.

⁵ See JOHN PAUL II, *Fides et Ratio*, n. 66.

⁶ See JOHN PAUL II, *Fides et Ratio*, n. 66.

⁷ INTERNATIONAL THEOLOGICAL COMMISSION, "Theology Today: Perspectives, Principles and Criteria", n. 18.

Dei and *scientia fidei*, is presented as a rational participation in the knowledge that God has of himself and of all things (n. 18) and aims to understand the saving truth of God in a rational and systematic manner (n. 19).

In its overview of the history of thought on the scientific nature of theology, the document highlights the medieval achievement of articulating the intelligible connections between the mysteries of the faith and of a synthetic and scientific exposition of the intelligible content of the Word of God. Unfortunately, this unified structure of Christian wisdom began to break apart in the Fourteenth Century (nn. 67-68). As the centuries passed, enlightenment-age Catholic theology gave priority to apologetics and natural theology over the sapiential dimension of theology and the *intellectus fidei*⁸.

After referring to this tendency which continued into the Nineteenth Century, the document identifies a new challenge for contemporary theology, namely, the current crisis in metaphysics. The document proposes that theology itself can help overcome this crisis in metaphysics and revitalize an authentic metaphysics (n. 71), advocates the sapiential dimension of theology, and argues that while metaphysical wisdom offers a vision of reality unified around being, the Word of God opens up the way to a higher wisdom. This higher wisdom has two forms:

- [1] *Theological wisdom*, the work of reason enlightened by faith, “offers a unified explanation of reality in light of the highest truths of revelation and it enlightens everything from the foundational mystery of the Trinity, considered both in itself and in its action in creation and in history” (n. 91).
- [2] *Mystical wisdom*, a gift of the Holy Spirit, comes from union with God in love. This love “creates an affective connaturality between the human being and God, who allows spiritual persons to know and even suffer things divine” (n. 91). This wisdom is a “non-conceptual knowledge” that “leads to contemplation and personal union with God in peace and silence” (n. 91).

Read together, *Fides et Ratio* and “Theology Today” set up a very interesting panorama. On the one hand, dogmatic theology is in need of a genuine metaphysical horizon and metaphysical wisdom. On the other, theology is presented as a remedy for contemporary metaphysics and as something that urges the metaphysician to pursue a higher wisdom based on God’s Revelation.

In this paper, then, I would like to explore this interplay between faith and reason. First, I outline a genuine or authentic metaphysics as a horizon for the *intellectus fidei* in dogmatic theology. In particular, I present this horizon in relation to the “foundational mystery” of the Trinity and Trinity’s creative and salvific action. Second, I present one example of the higher wisdom based on God’s Revelation: a

⁸ See INTERNATIONAL THEOLOGICAL COMMISSION, “Theology Today: Perspectives, ...”, n. 70: “In many cases, Catholic theology reacted defensively against the challenge of Enlightenment thinking. It gave priority to apologetics rather than to the sapiential dimension of faith, it separated too much the natural order of reason and the supernatural order of faith, and it gave great importance to ‘natural theology’ and too little to the *intellectus fidei* as an understanding of the mysteries of the faith. Catholic theology was thus left damaged in various respects by its own strategy in this encounter”.

Trinitarian understanding of the *exitus* and *reditus* of creation. In both explorations, I will refer to the thought of St. Thomas Aquinas⁹.

1. Metaphysical Wisdom

In the Prologue to his *Commentary on Aristotle's Metaphysics*, Aquinas holds that trans-physical things are discovered by way of resolution¹⁰. This means that the metaphysician must go beyond the study of mobile being (*ens mobile*), proper to the philosophy of nature, and consider being (*ens*) in a superior fashion in metaphysics, namely being as being (*ens in quantum ens*). Metaphysics properly begins when the relation of being (*esse*) to being (*ens*) is questioned¹¹: What is the relationship between that-which-is (*ens* as *id quod est*) and being (*esse*)? Is being (*esse*) identical to or really distinct from that-which-is? If there is a real distinction or ontological difference, what is the cause of this distinction or difference? Put more simply, the discovery of the *subiectum* of metaphysics concerns a change in questioning from the search for the causes of movement (philosophy of nature) to the search for the causes of substance (metaphysics).

It is important to note that in metaphysics, what is primarily studied is not our “idea of being” (which turns into a type of metaphysics of knowledge) or the essence of *ens* (which tends toward formalism and toward a reflection on *ens possibile* instead of *ens in actu*). Furthermore, it should be noted that according to Aquinas God is not included in the *genus subiectum* of metaphysics¹². Such indications help the metaphysician avoid the dangers of an onto-theological conception of God, which tends to place God under the concept of *ens* or under the notion of *esse* or consider him as cause of himself (*causa sui*).

In metaphysics, *ens in quantum ens* is understood as referring to everything that has being in a participated way. Metaphysics, as a search for wisdom, seeks to know the ultimate intrinsic and extrinsic causes of *ens* as *id quod finite participat esse*¹³. The method proper to metaphysics is called “resolution” and has two principal forms: there is a resolution of the *subiectum* to its intrinsic principles and there is also a complementary reduction of the *subiectum* to its extrinsic causes¹⁴.

⁹ See F. OCÁRIZ, “Teologia sistemática ed esegesi bíblica”, in *Il método teológico*, a cura di M. Sodi, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Vatican City 2008, 78-81. In reference to the *intellectus fidei*, Msgr. Ocariz advocates the development of an “essential Thomism” (represented by Cornelio Fabro) that has the act of being as its cornerstone and center. This type of metaphysics aids the understanding of the mystery of the Incarnation and the mystery of the supernatural.

¹⁰ See THOMAS AQUINAS, *In Metaph.*, prol.: “Haec enim transphysica inveniuntur in via resolutionis”.

¹¹ See A. CONTAT, “Le figure della differenza ontologica nel tomismo del Novecento”, *Alpha Omega* 11 (2008), 233-238.

¹² See L. ROMERA, “L’oggetto della metafisica include Dio?”, in *Tommaso d’Aquino e l’oggetto della metafisica*, (a cura di S. BROCK), Armando Editore, Roma 2004, 115-148.

¹³ See THOMAS AQUINAS, *In Librum De causis*, lect. 6: “Sed secundum rei veritatem causa prima est supra ens in quantum est ipsum esse infinitum, ens autem dicitur id quod finite participat esse, et hoc est proportionatum intellectui nostro cuius obiectum est quod quid est ut dicitur in III de anima, unde illud solum est capabile ab intellectu nostro quod habet quidditatem participantem esse; sed dei quidditas est ipsum esse, unde est supra intellectum”.

¹⁴ See THOMAS AQUINAS, *In Boethii De Trinitate*, q. 6, a. 1.

The philosophy of nature studies *ens mobile*¹⁵ and through its two resolutions of accidental change and substantial change brings to light two real compositions: those of accident-subject and form-matter. These considerations, as I noted, are surpassed when the structural and causal relationship between substantial form and *esse* is questioned. The substantial form, in the entry into metaphysics, is seen as limiting being (*esse*) in some way. Thus, a new *subiectum* is discovered – a study of being as being, of *ens* in relation to its *esse*.

Ens, it will be argued in metaphysics, is not the result of a composition of two acts, one existential and the other formal, but is rather a real composition of an actuating perfection (*esse* as *actus essendi*) and a specifying measure of perfection (*essentia* as *potentia essendi*)¹⁶. According to the first, formalistic conception, existence has the primary role of placing a possible essence outside of its cause and outside of nothingness. *Existencia*, in this case, refers to the fact of being more than the act of being. According to the second “intensive” conception, *actus essendi* is seen to be the intrinsic source of the actuality and perfection of all the other acts and perfections of a finite being.

The relationship between *essentia* as measure of perfection and *esse* as intrinsic source of perfection opens up to the problem of how the finite *ens* is ordered intrinsically to its proper operation which, in turn, perfects the finite *ens*. The metaphysician, then, must consider the relationship between: 1) *esse* as source of the perfection of a being; 2) the nature which specifies and mediates this perfection to the finite *ens*; and 3) the ordering of the finite *ens* to an ulterior perfection and ultimate end, obtained by means of its highest operation.

Hence, while the philosophy of nature considers the two compositions of mobile, material being, metaphysics considers the composition of essence-*esse* and the relation of the substance (considered as *suppositum*) to its finalized *operari*.

In the metaphysical reduction to extrinsic causes, something similar to the passage from the intrinsic compositions of the philosophy of nature to those of metaphysics occurs. In the philosophy of nature there is a reduction of *ens mobile* to a first mover (as efficient cause) and a consideration of the teleology of nature (final causality): the end of generation, in fact, is ordered to the end of the thing generated¹⁷. Metaphysics goes beyond these reflections and, on the one hand, sees that God’s universal causality extends even to the *productio ex nihilo* of the subject of substantial change, prime matter, and, on the other, considers the finalization of nature in the

¹⁵ See THOMAS AQUINAS, *In I Phys.*, lect. 1, n. 3: “Et quia omne quod habet materiam mobile est, consequens est quod ens mobile sit subiectum naturalis philosophiae”. *In VI Metaph.*, lect. 1, n. 1155: “Sic patet, quod naturalis scientia est circa determinatum subiectum, quod est ens mobile; et habet determinatum modum definiendi, scilicet cum materia”.

¹⁶ See A. CONTAT, “*Esse, essentia, ordo: Verso una metafisica della partecipazione operativa*”, *Espíritu* 61 (2012), 32: “Mentre l’Aquinata vede nell’atto di essere la fonte di tutti i livelli di attualità del supposito, e nell’essenza la determinazione potenziale che costituisce strutturalmente lo stesso *esse* come lo *esse* di tale cosa, [Giovanni di san Tommaso] capisce l’esistenza come l’atto che pone la cosa fuori del nulla e delle sue cause, e l’essenza come un altro atto che, sebbene non sia nulla senza l’esistenza, conferisce però alla cosa la sua consistenza quidditativa”.

¹⁷ See J. AERTSEN, *Nature and Creatures: The Way of Thought of Thomas Aquinas*, E.J. Brill, Leiden 1988, 355: Two ends must be distinguished. First there is the end of generation, which is identical with the specific form whereby the things is completed in itself; secondly, there is the end of the thing generated, which is to say that whereby the thing has its ultimate perfection. And the first end, nature, is directed to the second. See THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa theologiae*, I-II, q. 49, a. 3.

context of the effective realization of God's providential plan. Metaphysics does not seek to demonstrate the temporal beginning of the creation, but rather focuses on the causal dependence of what is created.

We see, then, that the metaphysical resolution to intrinsic causes opens up to the consideration of God both as creator and as governor of all finite beings. However, before articulating this doctrine of creation and divine governance, the metaphysician needs to complete three tasks: he must first prove the existence of God as first cause, second, delineate the nature of this first cause according to the *triplex via*, and, third, explain the intellectual and voluntary action of the first, omnipotent cause.

The Five Ways of Thomas Aquinas lead to God as the ultimate cause of the motion of the creature (First Way), of the form of the creature (Third Way), of the participated being and perfection of the creature (Fourth Way) and of the ordering and governing of the creature to its end (Fifth Way)¹⁸. So, while physics arrives to the ultimate efficient cause of the motion of material being, metaphysics sees, in a superior manner, that every finite *ens*, including spiritual beings, is mobile in an analogous way and ultimately moved by the first unmoved mover, whose substance is identical to its act. Furthermore, unlike the philosophy of nature, which does not consider the production of prime matter, metaphysics applies the following principle to prime matter: "from the fact that something has being by participation, it follows that it is caused by another"¹⁹. Thus, prime matter, insofar as it participates in the being of the substantial form, is caused by that which is *Esse per essentiam*²⁰.

With regard to the nature of the first cause, it can in no way be composed, imperfect, finite, mobile or divided. These are the conclusions of the *via remotionis*²¹. At the same time, according to the *via eminentiae*, God is his being and his essence, is maximumly one, is diverse from all other beings, is the *Prima veritas*, and is the *Summum bonum*. God's intellectual and voluntary action – due to his simplicity, perfection and immobility – is really identical to his being and substance and in no way is in potency. God knows all things other than himself by knowing himself and loves all things other than himself by loving himself. Lastly, God's active power is identical to himself and extends to all things that are not impossible in themselves²².

As efficient cause of everything that is not himself, God produces the creature *ex nihilo*. Due to this radical production, the creature is constituted in a real relation of dependence on God. As exemplary cause, God's divine exemplar ideas measure the nature of the creature, which, in turn limits and specifies the *esse* of the creature²³. Consequently, the creature imitates the divine nature according to this measure²⁴. As

¹⁸ See J. MITCHELL, "The Method of *resolutio* and the Structure of the Five Ways", *Alpha Omega* 15 (2012), 339-380.

¹⁹ THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa theologiae*, I, q. 44, a. 1 ad 1: "Ex hoc quod aliquid per participationem est ens, sequitur quod sit causatum ab alio".

²⁰ See THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa theologiae*, I, q. 44, a. 2.

²¹ See THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa contra Gentiles*, I, ch. 14.

²² See THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa theologiae*, I, q. 25, a. 1: "In Deo maxime sit potentia activa".

²³ See THOMAS AQUINAS, *De Potentia*, q. 3, a. 16 ad 4: "Oportet autem illud quod est causa entis in quantum est ens, esse causam omnium differentiarum entis, et per consequens totius multitudinis entium".

²⁴ See G. DOOLAN, *Aquinas on the Divine Ideas as Exemplar Causes*, CUA Press, Washington DC 2008, 249: "Although the essences of finite beings do not participate in their exemplar ideas, they do participate in the exemplar that is God's nature. And it is through such participation that created essences receive and limit *esse*. This limitation, however, is dependent upon the ontologically prior

final cause, God creates in order to communicate his goodness and to manifest his glory. The creature is ordered and governed to this goodness and glory in different ways according to their nature. All creatures thus return to God but in different ways. God moves and governs the creature to their ultimate end in accordance with their natures. Irrational creatures tend to God by participating in his goodness and by way of assimilation. Only spiritual creatures are able to return perfectly to God since they are able to be united to God through knowledge and love. They reach God, participating in his beatitude and according to operation²⁵. This, in synthesis, is the wisdom obtained by metaphysical reflection on being.

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After having summarized the main elements of a genuine “metaphysical horizon” for dogmatic theology, we can return to three of the five themes highlighted by *Fides et Ratio* that concern the relationship between metaphysics and theology.

1. *The use of language to speak about God.* While recognizing the limitations of our language about God, the metaphysician affirms that this language is analogical and not just metaphorical. This means that although there is not a univocal species or genus that is common to the creature and God, God is the analogical cause of the creature and its perfections. God, according to the *via causalitatis*, is said to be “good” since he is the efficient, exemplar and final cause of the creature’s goodness. God, however, as analogical cause of goodness, is not good in a creaturely way. This is affirmed according to the *via remotionis*, namely, that God does not have his goodness in a participated or composite manner. God is the *summum bonum*. This is also affirmed *per viam eminentiae* due to God’s perfection (as negation of any defect): God is the most desirable of beings and is not ordered to any other being as his end. In summary, metaphysics ensures that we can predicate perfections of God in a substantial way. The predication of divine names is not limited to relational or negative names, but extends to predicating certain perfections in a substantial way and in an eminent way. Man’s reason, by means of analogy, is capable of surpassing what is material and sensible, and is able to know what is transcendent and metaphysical²⁶ (FR, 83).

2. *God’s creative activity in the world.* Metaphysics affirms and demonstrates that everything that is not God depends on him for their being. Since God does not act to obtain something that he is not or does not possess, God does not create by necessity but by free will. This free creative action extends also to creaturely causality and action. Creatures, according to Aquinas, are not just occasions for divine causality. Rather, as the cause of their being, their form (principle of operation), and the cause of the application of a power to its operation, God is also cause of the operation of his creatures²⁷.

formation of the divine ideas, which determine the limited modes of being (*esse*) received by created essences. Thus, even though the divine nature is imitable in itself, it is only imitated by a finite being because God both knows his nature as imitable and wills it actually to be so imitated. As regards created essence, its mode of being is determined by its divine idea, but its actuality is determined by the finite being’s participating in a likeness of the divine nature”.

²⁵ See THOMAS AQUINAS, *Compendium theologiae*, I, ch. 103 - 107.

²⁶ See JOHN PAUL II, *Fides et Ratio*, n. 83.

²⁷ See THOMAS AQUINAS, *De Potentia*, q. 3, a. 7.

3. *Relationship between God and man.* Philosophical anthropology concludes that God creates the spiritual soul of man and that man is ordered to God as ultimate end. It is God, who governs man – in accord with man’s rational and spiritual nature – to that end²⁸. In sacred theology, the eternal law is seen as directing man to an end that exceeds his nature by means of grace, which is a participation in divine nature. The eternal law moves man to his supernatural end through supernatural inclinations that come from participation in divine nature. These supernatural inclinations are the theological virtues²⁹.

2. Trinitarian Theology

The entry into sacred theology is marked by three important changes with respect to metaphysics. First the *subiectum* of the two sciences is distinct: while metaphysics (and philosophical theology) studies *ens qua ens*, sacred theology studies God³⁰. Secondly, unlike metaphysics, theology is a subalternate science: sacred theology receives its principles from another science by means of revelation. This higher *scientia* is the very knowledge that God has of himself³¹. Thirdly, while metaphysics methodologically resolves its *subiectum* into its intrinsic and extrinsic causes, sacred theology, as *scientia fidei*, follows the theological method, constituted by the two moments of *auditus fidei* and *intellectus fidei*. The understanding in this life of what has been revealed is ordered to the vision of the same in the life to come.

This distinction between the knowledge of God proper to metaphysics and the knowledge of God proper to Sacred Theology is brought out clearly in Aquinas’s *Summa contra Gentiles*, IV, ch. 1, a text in which Aquinas distinguishes three types of human knowledge of the divine. The metaphysical wisdom expounded in Section One of this paper corresponds to the first type: “by the natural light of reason, man ascends

²⁸ See J. RHIZA, *Perfecting Human Actions. St. Thomas Aquinas on Human Participation in Eternal Law*, CUA Press, Washington DC. 2009, 73: “[U]nlike irrational creatures, humans are moved and guided to act intellectually by means of a certain knowledge of the *ratio* in the mind of God and appetively by means of a desire for the good that is found essentially in God alone. Hence, humans as rational beings are governed by the eternal law so that they freely determine the actions they perform”.

²⁹ See J. RHIZA, *Perfecting Human Actions...*, 142-143.

³⁰ See THOMAS AQUINAS, *In Boethii De Trinitate*, q. 5, a. 4: “Sic ergo theologia sive scientia divina est duplex: una in qua considerantur res divine non tamquam subiectum scientiae, sed tamquam principia subiecti, et talis est theologia quam philosophi prosequuntur, quae alio nomine metaphysica dicitur; alia vero quae ipsas res divinas considerat propter se ipsas ut subiectum scientiae, et haec est theologia quae in sacra Scriptura traditur”. See also G. EMERY, *The Trinitarian Theology of St. Thomas Aquinas*, 43: “Philosophical theology (i.e. metaphysics) achieves its goal by considering God as the principle of being; but the subject of the ‘theology transmitted by sacred Scripture’ is God considered in himself. If one looks at it like this, theology and philosophy take inverse routes. Philosophy derives from the consideration of creatures and knows God as the principle of these creatures; whereas Christian doctrine issues from revelation and takes its departure from the study of God, using this to illuminate our knowledge of creatures”.

³¹ See THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa theologiae*, I, q. 1, a. 2: “Duplex est scientiarum genus. Quaedam enim sunt, quae procedunt ex principiis notis lumine naturali intellectus, sicut arithmetica, geometria, et huiusmodi. Quaedam vero sunt, quae procedunt ex principiis notis lumine superioris scientiae, sicut perspectiva procedit ex principiis notificatis per geometriam, et musica ex principiis per arithmetica notis. Et hoc modo sacra doctrina est scientia, quia procedit ex principiis notis lumine superioris scientiae, quae scilicet est scientia Dei et beatorum. Unde sicut musica credit principia tradita sibi ab arithmetico, ita doctrina sacra credit principia revelata sibi a Deo”.

to knowledge of God through creatures”³². But so that man could have a firmer knowledge of God, God revealed certain things about himself that transcend the human intellect: “The second [type of knowledge] is that by which the divine truth, exceeding the human intellect, descends on us by way of revelation, not however, as quasi-demonstrated to be seen, but quasi-spoken in words to be believed”³³. In the third type of knowledge, the beatific vision of God’s essence is “that by which the human mind will be elevated to gaze perfectly upon that which has been revealed”³⁴.

The revelation of the Trinity corresponds to the second type of human knowledge of the divine. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, reveals to us that God is not only Father as the Creator of all things, but that God “is eternally Father in relation to his only Son, who is eternally Son only in relation to his Father”³⁵. The revelation of the eternal generation of the Son is completed by the revelation of the eternal procession of the Holy Spirit (John 15:26). In fact, it is in the sending of the person of the Holy Spirit that reveals the mystery of the holy Trinity in its fullness.

The articulation of the dogma of the Trinity, as the *Catechism* notes, was a difficult task that was aided throughout the centuries by philosophy³⁶. The Church gave new meaning to philosophical notions and terms like substance, person, procession, and relation, and used them in an analogical manner: “The treatise on the Trinity develops many themes which are applied to God by the use of analogy (person, relation, order, origin, procession, etc.); the properties of the persons are also set out by means of analogies derived from anthropology (word, love)”³⁷. The correct analogical use of terms, requires an accurate metaphysical understanding of creatures: “The analogies deployed by Trinitarian doctrine are a case in point: a good understanding of the mystery of God requires an accurate assessment of the creatures who make an analogical disclosure of our faith in God possible”³⁸.

2.1 The Three Divine Persons

In the *Summa Theologiae*, Aquinas prefaces his exposition of the meaning of “divine person” (q. 29) with two questions: one question on the four divine relations (q.

³² THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa contra Gentiles*, IV, ch. 1: “Quarum prima est secundum quod homo naturali lumine rationis, per creaturas in Dei cognitionem ascendit”.

³³ THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa theologiae*, IV, ch. 1: “Secunda est prout divina veritas, intellectum humanum excedens, per modum revelationis in nos descendit, non tamen quasi demonstrata ad videndum, sed quasi sermone prolata ad credendum”.

³⁴ THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa theologiae*, IV, ch. 1: “Tertia est secundum quod mens humana elevabitur ad ea quae sunt revelata perfecte intuenda.”.

³⁵ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, n. 240: “Iesus, Deum esse ‘Patrem’, sensu inaudito, revelavit: Ille non est tantummodo Pater quatenus Creator, sed Pater est aeternae in relatione ad Filium Suum unicum, qui aeternae Filius non est nisi in relatione ad Patrem Suum: ‘Nemo novit Filium nisi Pater, neque Patrem quis novit nisi Filius et cui voluerit Filius revelare’ (Mt 11,27).”.

³⁶ See *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, n. 251: “Pro enuntiatione dogmatis Trinitatis, Ecclesia propriam terminologiam evolvere debuit, notionibus originis philosophicae adiuta: ‘substantia’, ‘persona’ vel ‘hypostasis’, ‘relatio’ etc. Hoc faciens, fidem non submisit sapientiae humanae, sed sensum novum, inauditum, his dedit vocabulis, quae exinde ad significandum etiam destinabantur mysterium ineffabile quod « infinite omne id superat, quod nos modo humano intellegere possumus”.

³⁷ G. EMERY, *The Trinitarian Theology of St. Thomas Aquinas*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2007, 26-27.

³⁸ G. EMERY, *The Trinitarian Theology of St. Thomas Aquinas*, 44.

28); and one on the two processions (q. 27) that are the foundations for the relations³⁹. Aquinas notes that the word “procession” is used in sacred Scripture⁴⁰ and that it applies to the origin of both the Son and the Holy Spirit. Procession in God, however, must be grasped not as the reduction of a potency to act within a category such as “quality”, “quantity” or “*ubi*”, but rather as “drawing out (*eductio*) of a principled from its principle”⁴¹ or as an “order of emanation”⁴². In the divine procession, the principle is really distinct from the one who proceeds, yet both the principle and the principled subsist in the same divine nature: the principled is consubstantial with the principle.

The real relation between the principle and the principled is founded not on quantity, but on “action and passion”. This is because “action implies both an acting subject and some reality which issues from this agent, that is to say, something which *proceeds* from it”⁴³. In accord with this, Aquinas explains the two divine processions not as actions *ad extra*, but rather as similar to the two immanent actions of intellect and will⁴⁴.

The Word is presented as proceeding from the Father by way of intellect (*per modum intellectus*) and according to the notion of likeness. Emery comments that: “the act of thought consists in a union, an assimilation: the knowing subject somehow makes the perfections which belong to other beings exist within himself”⁴⁵. Hence, by means of the analogy of intellectual procession, Aquinas can speak about the principle aspects of divine generation: the *distinction* of the Word from its principle, its relation of *origin*, its *immanence* in its principle, and its *unity* with its principle⁴⁶.

Aquinas begins with the intellectual procession of the Word and not with the notion of generation so as to grasp first an *immanent* action whose issue is *consubstantial* with its principle. Only then is the procession of the Word identified with the generation of the Son. In God, then, generation is disassociated from the passage of non-being to being, but retains, by means of analogy, the notion of “communication of a similar nature”⁴⁷. The Word “proceeds by the *ratio* of similitude, since the conception of the intellect is the likeness of the thing known and exists in the same nature”⁴⁸. The Son, proceeding from the Father as Word, is called “Image” insofar as it implies the notion of likeness.

³⁹ See G. EMERY, *Trinity in Aquinas*, Sapientia Press, Naples 2003, 134: “Since the divine person will be conceived as a subsisting relation, the study of the *person* must be preceded by a study of *relation*, and since the real relation is founded on a procession, the study of the relation must be preceded by a prior study of *procession*. The order of our concepts in the intelligence of the Trinitarian mystery, therefore will be the following: (1) the processions; (2) the relations; (3) the persons”.

⁴⁰ See THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa theologiae*, I, q. 27, q. 1: “Divina Scriptura, in rebus divinis, nominibus ad processionem pertinentibus utitur”.

⁴¹ THOMAS AQUINAS, *In I Sent.*, d. 13, q. 1, a. 1: “Dicitur processio eductio principiati a suo principio”.

⁴² THOMAS AQUINAS, *De Potentia*, q. 10, a. 1 ad 2: “Processio prout significat motum localem, non ponitur in divinis personis, sed secundum quod importat quemdam emanationis ordinem”.

⁴³ See G. EMERY, *The Trinitarian Theology of St. Thomas Aquinas*, 55.

⁴⁴ See G. EMERY, *Trinity in Aquinas*, 138: “Thomas uses his interpretation of Aristotelian anthropology to show, by analogy, that there can only be two types of immanent actions in God: the activity of the intelligence and that of the will”.

⁴⁵ G. EMERY, *The Trinitarian Theology of St. Thomas Aquinas*, 59.

⁴⁶ See G. EMERY, *The Trinitarian Theology of St. Thomas Aquinas*, 59-60.

⁴⁷ See G. EMERY, *The Trinitarian Theology of St. Thomas Aquinas*, 61.

⁴⁸ THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa theologiae*, I, q. 27, a. 2: “Procedit enim per modum intelligibilis actionis, quae est operatio vitae, et a principio coniuncto, ut supra iam dictum est, et secundum

The second procession is distinct from the first and is not called a “generation”. It is an immanent procession by way of love (*per modum amoris*), according to the operation of the will, and, consequently, according to the notion of an impulse towards another. This procession of Love “can be called *spiration*, since it is the procession of the Spirit”⁴⁹. In this procession, the object that is loved (Holy Spirit) is in the lover (Father and Son). Aquinas explains that since we do not find in the created world, a reality which proceeds by way of love, we can only give a common name to the divine procession of Love⁵⁰.

Understanding of the difference between the first and the second procession is aided by a proper understanding of the relationship between the form, inclination, appetite, operation. In synthesis the natural forms of creatures incline them to their fitting operations and to the end which fits their operations⁵¹. Will is presented by Aquinas as an intellectual appetite, as an inclination of intellectual beings toward that which they grasp through their intellectual understanding. It is an inclination towards the good apprehended by intelligence and is the capacity to convey oneself towards an end grasped by one’s mind⁵². In the natural sensitive and intellectual appetites, the name love is given to the principle of movement toward the beloved end.

Love differs from knowledge in that love is not had by the presence of a likeness or similitude of the beloved in the one who loves, rather the presence of the beloved is achieved under the aspect of what impels and moves toward something⁵³. As Emery comments: “The beloved being is present in a *dynamic* mode, like a vital momentum, a weight of love entraining the will toward the beloved being. [...] loves carries the will outside of itself toward the beloved good”⁵⁴. The beloved is present to the will as inclining the person towards the beloved. Furthermore, in the *Summa theologiae*, Aquinas “no longer just discerns an *action* in the loving will, but sees in it a ‘fruit’

rationem similitudinis, quia conceptio intellectus est similitudo rei intellectae, et in eadem natura existens”.

⁴⁹ THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa theologiae*, I, q. 27, a. 4 ad 3: “Sed potest nominari spiratio, quia est processio Spiritus”.

⁵⁰ THOMAS AQUINAS, *In I Sent.*, d. 13, q. 1, a. 3 ad 2: “In rebus creatis invenimus aliquid in se subsistens, procedere per modum naturae, et hoc dicimus generari; unde secundum hoc potuimus processionem Filii proprio nomine nominare, scilicet generationis nomine. Sed non invenimus aliquid in creaturis per se subsistens, procedere per modum amoris, sicut Spiritus Sanctus procedit: et ideo istam processionem non potuimus nominare nomine proprio, sed tantum communi”.

⁵¹ See THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa contra Gentiles*, IV, ch. 19: “In qualibet intellectuali natura oportet inveniri voluntatem. Intellectus enim fit in actu per formam intelligibilem inquantum est intelligens, sicut res naturalis fit actu in esse naturali per propriam formam. Res autem naturalis per formam qua perficitur in sua specie, habet inclinationem in proprias operationes et proprium finem, quem per operationes consequitur: quale enim est unumquodque, talia operatur, et in sibi convenientia tendit. Unde etiam oportet quod ex forma intelligibili consequatur in intelligente inclinatio ad proprias operationes et proprium finem. Haec autem inclinatio in intellectuali natura voluntas est, quae est principium operationum quae in nobis sunt, quibus intelligens propter finem operatur: finis enim et bonum est voluntatis obiectum. Oportet igitur in quolibet intelligente inveniri etiam voluntatem”.

⁵² See G. EMERY, *The Trinitarian Theology of St. Thomas Aquinas*, 64.

⁵³ See THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa theologiae*, I, q. 27, a. 4: “Processio autem quae attenditur secundum rationem voluntatis, non consideratur secundum rationem similitudinis, sed magis secundum rationem impellentis et moventis in aliquid. Et ideo quod procedit in divinis per modum amoris, non procedit ut genitum vel ut Filius, sed magis procedit ut spiritus, quo nomine quaedam vitalis motio et impulsio designatur, prout aliquis ex amore dicitur moveri vel impelli ad aliquid faciendum”.

⁵⁴ G. EMERY, *The Trinitarian Theology of St. Thomas Aquinas*, 66.

which proceeds from volition and remains in the will”⁵⁵. The Holy Spirit, proceeding from the Father and the Son as Love, is called “Gift” insofar as he is apt to be given. From the fact that the beloved exists in the will as *inclinans* and *impellens*, Aquinas argues that this impulse belongs to the Spirit as almost a sort of spiration⁵⁶. Furthermore the Spirit is said to be *breathed* in procession, the Father and the Son *breath* the Spirit, which is a notional act (I, q. 27, a. 4 ad 3).

In *De potentia*, Aquinas reflects on the fact that there are no other immanent processions within God, only an *ad extra* procession of creatures:

There is in God, as there is in us, a sort of ‘circulation’ in the works of intellect and will; for the will returns to that which understanding initiated. But with us the ‘circle’ (*circulus*) closes in that which is outside of us: the external good moving our intellect, our intellect moving the will, and the will returning. But in God, the ‘circle’ is completed within himself: for when God understands himself, he conceives his Word which is the ‘rationale’ of everything known by him, since he understands all things by understanding himself; and through his Word, he ‘proceeds to the love of all things and of himself. [...] And the circle being completed, nothing more can be added to it: so that a third procession within the divine nature is impossible, although there follows a procession toward external nature’⁵⁷.

Generation and spiration, then, are notional actions that come about not by will, but by divine nature. Furthermore, “the power through which the Father begets the Son must be designated as the divine nature itself in the person of the Father”⁵⁸.

The two processions in God are the act upon which the four real relations in God are founded. These real relations distinguish the divine persons, yet maintain the substantial unity of the Trinity⁵⁹. In order to predicate “relation” analogically of the Trinity, Aquinas looks at created relations and distinguishes between the being (*esse*) of the accident and its *ratio*. With regard to the first, the real relations in God – unlike the real relations in creatures, which have accidental *esse* and inhere in the subject – are not accidental. Instead, “the *esse* of the divine relation is the same being as the divine substance”⁶⁰. With regard to the second, “the relation is transposed in God as a pure relationship of ‘opposition according to origin’ (paternity, filiation, and procession). Under this second aspect, the relation does not consist in a determination

⁵⁵ G. EMERY, *The Trinitarian Theology of St. Thomas Aquinas*, 68.

⁵⁶ See THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa contra Gentiles*, IV, ch. 19.

⁵⁷ THOMAS AQUINAS, *De Potentia*, q. 9, a. 9: “Est ergo tam in nobis quam in Deo circulatio quaedam in operibus intellectus et voluntatis; nam voluntas redit in id a quo fuit principium intelligendi: sed in nobis concluditur circulus ad id quod est extra, dum bonum exterius movet intellectum nostrum, et intellectus movet voluntatem, et voluntas tendit per appetitum et amorem in exterius bonum; sed in deo iste circulus clauditur in se ipso. Nam Deus intelligendo se, concipit Verbum suum, quod est etiam ratio omnium intellectuum per ipsum, propter hoc quod omnia intelligit intelligendo seipsum: et ex hoc Verbo procedit in amorem omnium et sui ipsius. [...] Postquam vero circulus conclusus est, nihil ultra addi potest; et ideo non potest sequi tertia processio in natura divina, sed sequitur ulterius processio in exteriorem naturam”. Quoted in G. EMERY, *The Trinitarian Theology of St. Thomas Aquinas*, 73.

⁵⁸ G. EMERY, *The Trinitarian Theology of St. Thomas Aquinas*, 76.

⁵⁹ See G. EMERY, *Trinity in Aquinas*, 140.

⁶⁰ G. EMERY, *Trinity in Aquinas*, 141.

of the divine essence, but rather consists only in the interpersonal relationship according to origin”⁶¹.

Paternity is the real relation of the Father to the Son and is founded on the act of generating; Filiation is the real relation of Son to the Father and is founded on his “being generated”; active spiration is the real relation of the Father and the Son to the Holy Spirit and is founded on the act of spirating; passive spiration is the real relation of the Holy Spirit to the Father and the Son and is founded on his “being spirated”. Three of the relations constitute persons: paternity, filiation and passive spiration. The relation of active spiration is not a personal property since it is common to the Father and the Son⁶².

“Person” is predicated analogously of human beings, angels and God. While a human person is an “individual substance of rational nature”, a Divine Person is said to be a “relation subsisting in divine nature”. The plurality of human persons stems from both the limitation of being by the essence and the individuation of the species by *material quantitate signata*; the plurality of divine persons stems from the relative oppositions that are founded on the two divine processions. The real distinction between the three Persons and their real identity with the divine nature does not posit three Gods, but rather One God in Three Persons.

The divine nature of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit is the same, yet this nature, writes Aquinas, is not had in the same “mode of existing according to relation” (*modus existendi secundum relationem*). The Father does not receive his “mode of existing according to relation” from another, while in the Son, his “mode of existing according to relation” is received from the Father⁶³. Aquinas continues: “Although the Godhead is wholly and perfectly in each of the three Persons according to its proper mode of existence, yet it belongs to the perfection of the Godhead that there be several modes of existence in God, namely that there be one from whom another proceeds yet proceeds from no other, and one proceeding from another”⁶⁴.

* * *

The use of metaphysics becomes evident in the analogical predication of “procession”, “relation” and “person”. Each notion, as it is attributed to God, is purified of its creaturely imperfection. Procession is no longer a reduction from potency to act,

⁶¹ G. EMERY, *Trinity in Aquinas*, 142.

⁶² G. EMERY, *Trinity in Aquinas*, 141: “Of these relations, three constitute persons: paternity, filiation, and procession. For this reason, these three relations of origin are called “personal properties”: Each of them belongs properly, in an exclusive way, to one person, and constitutes this person in the unity of the divine essence which is communicated. The relation of “active spiration” (relation of the Father and the Son to the Holy Spirit) is not a personal property, since it is common to the Father and the Son: The Father and the Son are not constituted as Father and Son through the spiration of the Spirit (though the spiration of the Spirit is not absent in the generation of the Son), but they are constituted by paternity and filiation”.

⁶³ See THOMAS AQUINAS, *De potentia*, q. 3, a. 15 ad 17: “Licet eadem natura sit Patris et Filii et Spiritus Sancti, non tamen eundem modum existendi habet in tribus, et dico modum existendi secundum relationem. In Patre enim est ut non accepta ab alio, in Filio vero ut a Patre accepta”.

⁶⁴ THOMAS AQUINAS, *De potentia*, q. 9, a. 5 ad 23: “Licet tota et perfecta divinitas sit in qualibet trium personarum secundum proprium modum existendi, tamen ad perfectionem divinitatis pertinet ut sint plures modi existendi in divinis ut scilicet sit ibi a quo alius et ipse a nullo, et aliquis qui est ab alio. Non enim esset omnimoda perfectio in divinis, nisi esset ibi processio Verbi et Amoris”.

but rather an immanent action resulting in a principled that is consubstantial with its principle; relation is no longer conceived of as inhering in a subject, but rather as subsisting; person is no longer distinct through reception of being or matter marked by quantity, but rather divine person entails distinction through relation alone⁶⁵.

2.2 The Trinitarian Missions

Before dealing with the Trinitarian missions in *Summa theologiae* (q. 43), Aquinas does two important things: he first introduces a distinction between things said of the divine essence and things said of the divine persons; second, he distinguishes between the essential acts of God and the notional acts proper to one of the three divine persons.

The four real relations in God, Aquinas argues, are able to be indicated with abstract terms called “notions” or “properties”. *Notio* is described as “that which is proper to the *ratio* in order to know a divine person”. Hence, it is possible to attribute certain divine properties to one of the persons in a special way. This attribution is called an “appropriation”: appropriation, Emery writes, “is the name for the theological procedure in which a feature belonging to the nature of God, common to all three persons, is specially ascribed to one of the divine persons”⁶⁶. Appropriation comes about “when an essential attribute is connected to a person with which this attribute has a special affinity”⁶⁷. In this way, Aquinas is able to distinguish between essential attributes of God and personal properties in God.

Second, Aquinas distinguishes the “essential acts” of God (such as the production of creatures) from the “notional acts” that are proper to one of the three divine persons. Notional acts differ from the relations only in their mode of signification⁶⁸. These actions are foundational with respect to the relation of the world and men to God⁶⁹.

After making these distinctions between essential properties and personal properties and between essential acts and notional acts, Aquinas approaches the theme of the Trinitarian missions.

⁶⁵ G. EMERY, *The Trinitarian Theology of St. Thomas Aquinas*, 117: “[T]he divine person is the relation in so far as it is a *subsisting* relation; it is the relation of origin in God, enjoying the prerogatives of the absolute in the mode of the hypostatic incommunicability, and it is this subsisting relation which is signified by the word *person*”.

⁶⁶ G. EMERY, *The Trinitarian Theology of St. Thomas Aquinas*, 312.

⁶⁷ G. EMERY, *The Trinitarian Theology of St. Thomas Aquinas*, 150.

⁶⁸ THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa theologiae*, I, q. 41, a. 1 ad 2.

⁶⁹ G. EMERY, *Trinity, Church, and the Human Person: Thomistic Essays*, Sapientia Press, Naples 2007: “In the *Summa theologiae*, the study of the properties of the persons seeks to show these persons in their divinity and their distinction, throwing light on their eternal existence and on their action in our favor. We can see this economic purpose in the study of the property of the Father, and especially in the study of the property of the Word (the Father spoke and made all things through his Word) and of the Holy Spirit (the Spirit is the Love through whom the Father and the Son love each other and us). Moreover, the Trinitarian treatise reaches its climax in the study of the divine missions, that is, in the Trinitarian foundation of the economy of grace (question 43). Whereas at first one might perhaps have suspected the speculative reflection to be deprived of interest for the economy of creation and salvation, one discovers in reality a doctrine that accounts for the foundations of God’s action and for the depth of the relations that the world and men hold with God”.

Aquinas begins by noting that the notion of “mission” includes two aspects: first, the relationship between the one who is sent and the one who sends (the eternal procession of the person); second, the relationship between the one who is sent and his destination (new presence according to the gift of sanctifying grace). “In the mission, the eternal procession of the divine person is extended to us, in time, by grace”⁷⁰. The divine persons dwell in the soul of the saints.

The Son was sent by the Father into the world. The Son began to be in the world in a visible way through the assumption of a human nature. The effects of his visible mission include his life, passion, death, resurrection from the dead and ascension into Heaven. After his ascension, he began to be present in the world in an invisible way by means of his presence (inhabitation) in man as Word of Truth. As noted in *Fides et Ratio*, metaphysics enables the proper understanding of Christ’s identity as true God and man. There is one divine hypostasis (with one *esse* as *actus essendi*) subsisting in two natures.

In his works, Aquinas highlights the different visible manifestations of the Spirit in the world: 1) the appearance as a dove at Christ’s Baptism; 2) the cloud at the Transfiguration; 3) being breathed on the apostles after the Resurrection; 4) the appearance as tongues of fire on the day of Pentecost. The effects of the invisible mission of the Holy Spirit, on the other hand, are the hypostatic union of the Word with the humanity assumed by the Word (by the Holy Spirit) and the inhabitation in men as Love.

A text from Emery shows how divine action and appropriation opens up to theme of the Trinitarian structure of the economy of creation and salvation:

[F]rom the facts that the Father creates and achieves all things through his Son and Spirit and that the procession of the divine persons is the cause of creation. We can thus attempt to discern the way in which the property of each person comes into play within the divine action (this will serve to consolidate the bases of appropriation), and ultimately to observe the Trinitarian structure of the economy of creation and grace as envisaged thus⁷¹.

The processions of the divine persons, it will be argued, are not only the reason for creation, but they also the reason for the grace by which spiritual creatures return to God. Hence, “the gift of grace appears as a personal Trinitarian communication in which the persons are given according to their relative properties”⁷². The saints rejoin God by knowing him and loving him: “This union with God is accomplished through the mission of the Son and the Spirit”⁷³.

3. The Trinitarian Structure of Creation and Salvation

Aquinas’s early *Commentary on the Sentences*, “gives extraordinary prominence to the causality of the Trinitarian processions: The procession of the divine persons is the cause, the reason, the origin, or the archetype of the procession of creatures”⁷⁴.

⁷⁰ G. EMERY, *Trinity in Aquinas*, 161.

⁷¹ G. EMERY, *The Trinitarian Theology of St. Thomas Aquinas*, 338.

⁷² G. EMERY, *Trinity in Aquinas*, 160.

⁷³ G. EMERY, *Trinity in Aquinas*, 160.

⁷⁴ G. EMERY, *Trinity in Aquinas*, 53.

Aquinas interprets the four books of the *Sentences* according to an *exitus-reditus* framework that expresses the Trinitarian structure of creation and salvation:

Exitus a principio of the divine persons in the unity of essence (Book I) and *exitus* of creatures in a diversity of essence (Book II); *reditus* from the perspective of the *reducens* (Book III), and in line with that which is required from the creatures being ‘led back’ (Book IV)⁷⁵.

In his *Commentary*, Aquinas establishes a causal relationship, on the one hand, between the *exitus* of the two divine persons and the *exitus* of creatures from God, and, on the other, between the two divine missions and the *reditus* of spiritual creatures to God:

The structural organization of the entire body of theological material thus depends upon the procession of the divine persons: their *exitus* allows for the *exitus* of creatures, and their mission (“invisible” and “visible”) brings creatures back to their source⁷⁶.

This insight concerning the *exitus* of creatures is also found in the *Summa theologiae*:

God is the cause of things by his intellect and will, just as the craftsman is cause of the things made by his craft. Now the craftsman works through the word conceived in the intellect, and through the love of his will regarding some object. Hence also God the Father made the creature through His Word, which is His Son; and through His Love, which is the Holy Spirit. And so the processions of the Persons are the *rationes* of the productions of creatures inasmuch as they include the essential attributes, knowledge and will⁷⁷.

Thomas will distinguish between the procession of the created effect (as what is produced) and the procession of the persons as the reason (*ratio*) for the production of creatures. Emery summarizes: “The Holy Spirit, as Love, proceeds as the reason for the production of creatures by the divine will, while the Son is engendered as the Word or the Art by whom God (the Father) creates all things”⁷⁸.

In the return of creatures to God, it is through the Son and the Holy Spirit that we are united to our ultimate end: “Thomas consigns the effects of the mission to the domain of the union with the end (grace and glory), while the causality of the procession of the persons in the *exitus* concerns the effects by which we subsist in our natural being”⁷⁹. We are brought to the Father through the missions of the Son and the

⁷⁵ G. EMERY, *Trinity in Aquinas*, 57-58.

⁷⁶ G. EMERY, *Trinity in Aquinas*, 59.

⁷⁷ THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa theologiae*, I, q. 45, a. 6: “Deus est causa rerum per suum intellectum et voluntatem, sicut artifex rerum artificiarum. Artifex autem per verbum in intellectu conceptum, et per amorem suae voluntatis ad aliquid relatum, operatur. Unde et Deus pater operatus est creaturam per suum Verbum, quod est Filius; et per suum Amorem, qui est Spiritus Sanctus. Et secundum hoc processiones personarum sunt rationes productionis creaturarum, inquantum includunt essentialia attributa, quae sunt scientia et voluntas”; *Ibid.*, ad 1: “Processiones divinarum personarum sunt causa creationis”.

⁷⁸ G. EMERY, *Trinity in Aquinas*, 59.

⁷⁹ G. EMERY, *Trinity in Aquinas*, 62.

Holy Spirit. At times, Aquinas also “attributes the stages of the divine economy to distinct persons: creation is appropriated to the Father, re-creation to the Son, and glorification or “consummation” to the Holy Spirit”⁸⁰.

3.1 The *exitus* of Creation from God

Metaphysics holds that creatures are created according to God’s wisdom (exemplary causality of the divine ideas) and his goodness (freedom of the divine will). Sacred Theology goes beyond this and holds that the procession of the Word and the procession of the Spirit are the *ratio* and cause of the *exitus* of creatures⁸¹. The creaturely procession requires in God the *ratio* of the will and of the imitable nature. Furthermore, the three causalities can be appropriated to the divine operations: efficient causality to the Father, exemplary causality to the Son, and final causality to the Holy Spirit.

In his *Commentary on the Sentences*, Aquinas indicates that two things are to be considered in the procession of creatures: first, the imitation of plenitude of God’s perfection according to efficient and exemplar causality and, second, the liberality of the divine will in creating. Once this is established, the processions of the Trinity can be seen as the rationale and cause for the procession of the creatures⁸².

3.1.1 The *exitus* of Creation and the Word

The procession of the Word is by Aquinas as the *ratio et causa* of the *exitus* of creatures⁸³. This means that the generation of the Son is the rationale (*ratio*) of all creation insofar as the Father has made everything in and through his Son. Commenting on the Gospel of John, Aquinas writes:

⁸⁰ G. EMERY, *The Trinitarian Theology of St. Thomas Aquinas*, 335. See *In III Sent.*, d. 1, q. 2, a. 2 ad 3: “Quod tria opera tribus personis appropriantur: creatio, quasi prima, Patri, qui est principium non de principio: glorificatio, quae est ultimus finis, Spiritui Sancto, ratione bonitatis: recreatio, quae media est, Filio, qui est media in trinitate persona.”

⁸¹ THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa theologiae*, I, q. 45, a. 7 ad 3: “Processiones personarum sunt causa et ratio creationis aliquo modo”.

⁸² THOMAS AQUINAS, *In I Sent.*, d. 10, q. 1, a. 1: “Quod in processione creaturarum duo est considerare ex parte ipsius creatoris: scilicet naturam ex cuius plenitudine et perfectione omnis creaturae perfectio et efficitur et exemplatur, ut supra dictum est, Dist. 2, qu. unic., art. 2, et voluntatem, ex cuius liberalitate, non naturae necessitate, haec omnia creaturae conferuntur. Supposita autem, secundum fidem nostram, processione divinarum personarum in unitate essentiae, ad cuius probationem ratio sufficiens non invenitur, oportet processionem personarum, quae perfecta est, esse rationem et causam processionis creaturae. Unde sicut processionem creaturarum naturae divinae perfectionem imperfecte repraesentantium reducimus in perfectam imaginem, divinam perfectionem plenissime continentem, scilicet Filium, tamquam in principium, et quasi naturalis processionis creaturarum a Deo, secundum scilicet imitationem naturae, exemplar et rationem; ita oportet quod, inquantum processio creaturae est ex liberalitate divinae voluntatis, reducatur in unum principium, quod sit quasi ratio totius liberalis collationis. Haec autem est amor, sub cuius ratione omnia a voluntate conferuntur; et ideo oportet aliquam personam esse in divinis procedentem per modum amoris, et haec est Spiritus Sanctus”.

⁸³ F. MARINELLI, *Personalismo trinitario nella storia della salvezza. Rapporti tra la ss.ma Trinità e le opere ad extra nello Scriptum super sententiis di san Tommaso*, Libreria Editrice della Pont. Università Lateranense, Roma 1969, 123-133.

God makes nothing except through the conception of his intellect, that is, the Word of God and the Son of God. So it is impossible that God make anything other than through his Son. And so Augustine says in *The Trinity* that the Word is the art full of the living patterns of all things. Thus, it is clear that everything which the Father makes, he makes through him⁸⁴.

Insofar as creatures issue from (*exeunt*) God by way of intellect, the Word is the *ratio* of the creatures. “Hence, it is said that the Father says everything in the Word or his Art”⁸⁵.

The Father sees and knows and says creatures in the Son⁸⁶. This, however, does not mean that the Son is the efficient or formal cause of the knowledge of the Father, but rather that it is in the notional act of “speaking” that that Father says the Word and created things in the Word. The Father knows and sees his extra-Trinitarian actions in the notional act of the generation of the Word and in the essential act of knowing common to the Word. It is in the notional act of “diction” that the Father essentially knows all creatures; in the act of generating the Son, the Father knows us.

Now, without love, the mental word is not perfect. Therefore, just as the act of perfect knowledge moves the will, so does the perfect Word of God associate to itself a perfect Love that is the Spirit⁸⁷. The order of the operations *ad extra* reproduces and manifests the immanent order of the Persons. “The power that God has of generating sons in the Son, namely of communicating his divine nature *ad extra*, is correlative to the generative force with which he communicates his nature to the Son”⁸⁸. At the same time, however, man does not become a son in the Son without being a son in the Spirit as well. Since the Word also spirates Love, then in the Word we find the convenience of the gratuitous donations *ad extra*. Hence, in the consideration of the Word it is necessary to consider the relationship of creation to the Spirit as Love.

Another aspect of the procession of the Word concerns the idea of manifestation: within the Trinity, the Word is both the manifestation of the Father and of all created things. Because of this, the Word is the exemplar principle with regard to the world⁸⁹. The modes of action of the persons of the Trinity correspond to their “mode of existing according to relation”: “Each person exists and acts or ‘operates’ after his personal relation. It is this which Thomas is unravelling when he says that it properly belongs to the Son to be the one *through whom* the Father acts”⁹⁰.

The Father does everything through the Son⁹¹. The Word is the operative plan and operative cause of the works which the Father achieves through him. This is gathered from the fact that the name “Word” contains a relationship to creatures:

⁸⁴ THOMAS AQUINAS, *In I Ioann.*, lect. 2, n. 77: “Deus nihil facit nisi per conceptum sui intellectus, qui est sapientia ab aeterno concepta, scilicet Dei Verbum, et Dei Filius: et ideo impossibile est quod aliquid faciat nisi per Filium. Unde Augustinus *De Trinitate* dicit quod Verbum est ars plena omnium rationum viventium. Et sic patet quod omnia quae Pater facit, facit per ipsum”.

⁸⁵ THOMAS AQUINAS, *In I Sent.*, d. 32, q. 1, a. 3: “Quamvis proprie verbum sit ratio creaturarum, secundum quod exeunt a Deo per modum intellectus. Unde dicitur, quod Pater dicit omnia Verbo, vel Arte sua”.

⁸⁶ F. MARINELLI, *Personalismo trinitario nella storia della salvezza*, 134-145.

⁸⁷ F. MARINELLI, *Personalismo trinitario nella storia della salvezza*, 139.

⁸⁸ F. MARINELLI, *Personalismo trinitario nella storia della salvezza*, 140.

⁸⁹ F. MARINELLI, *Personalismo trinitario nella storia della salvezza*, 145.

⁹⁰ G. EMERY, *The Trinitarian Theology of St. Thomas Aquinas*, 354.

⁹¹ F. MARINELLI, *Personalismo trinitario nella storia della salvezza*, 146-160.

The name 'Word' involves a reference to creatures. In knowing himself, God knows every creature. A word conceived mentally is the representation of all that is actually known. In us the diverse realities which we know occasion many words. But God knows himself and knows all things in one single act: his one single Word does not express the Father alone, but creatures as well. Moreover, whilst God's knowledge is simply cognitive with respect to himself, in relation to creatures it is simultaneously cognitive and productive. Thus, the Word of God is the expression of all that is in the Father, but, in relation to creatures, is both their expression and causative. This is why the Psalm says, "He spoke and they were made" (Ps. 33:9); because the Word includes the operative plan of God's works⁹².

When the Father knows himself, he conceives the Word. The Word, in turn, not only knows all that the Father knows, but also articulates all that is contained in the Father's knowledge. The Word is the perfect expression of the Father, and the expression of creatures contained in the Father's knowledge. The latter is creative knowledge and, consequently, the Word is the creative cause of all that the Father does⁹³. As Aquinas writes:

The Father acts through the Son, because the Son is the cause of that which is achieved from one and the same indivisible power, a power which the Son has in common with the Father but which he nonetheless receives from the Father's begetting⁹⁴.

The Son, as Word, is the Father's creative Art (*Ars Patris*). The Word is the model and likeness of all creatures; creatures are constituted in their species by participation in this likeness⁹⁵. This correlates the exemplary causality of the divine ideas and their "*locus*" in the Word: "Distinguishing and relating the Word and the ideas means bringing together discourse about the Persons in God and discourse about the divine essence. The ideas concern the divine essence but are appropriated to the second person of the Trinity, the Word who is 'between' the Father and the creature but not 'between' God and the creature because the Word is God"⁹⁶. The Word is not an "instrument" of the Father, since the Word is equal to the Father.

⁹² THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa theologiae*, I, q. 34, a. 3: "In Verbo importatur respectus ad creaturam. Deus enim, cognoscendo se, cognoscit omnem creaturam. Verbum autem in mente conceptum, est repraesentativum omnis eius quod actu intelligitur. Unde in nobis sunt diversa verba, secundum diversa quae intelligimus. Sed quia Deus uno actu et se et omnia intelligit, unicum Verbum eius est expressivum non solum Patris, sed etiam creaturarum. Et sicut Dei scientia Dei quidem est cognoscitiva tantum, creaturarum autem cognoscitiva et factiva; ita Verbum Dei eius quod in Deo Patre est, est expressivum tantum, creaturarum vero est expressivum et operativum. Et propter hoc dicitur in Psalmo XXXII, dixit, et facta sunt; quia in Verbo importatur ratio factiva eorum quae Deus facit".

⁹³ G. EMERY, *The Trinitarian Theology of St. Thomas Aquinas*, 196.

⁹⁴ THOMAS AQUINAS, *In II Sent.*, d. 13, q. 1, a. 5, sol.: "Alio modo quando eadem virtute operatur, quam tamen ab operante recipit; et sic dicimus patrem per filium operari, quia est causa ipsorum operatorum una et indivisibili virtute cum patre, quam tamen a patre nascendo recepit".

⁹⁵ THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa theologiae*, III, q. 3, a. 8.

⁹⁶ V. BOLAND, *Ideas in God according to Saint Thomas Aquinas*, E.J. Brill, Leiden 1996, 247-248.

3.1.2 The *exitus* of Creation and the Spirit

The Love of the Father for the Son is the *ratio* in which God gives every gift to creatures. Aquinas's analysis of the notion of "gift" allows him to conclude that since the reason for a gift is gratuitous love, then the Holy Spirit, who is love, by reason of his eternal procession, is both the first gift and also the reason for every other gift that is given out of love; every other gift is given only insofar as it participates in the love that the Spirit possesses essentially and personally, namely insofar as the gift is given out of love⁹⁷. The procession of Love, then, is the rationale for the free bestowal or donation (*ratio liberalis collationis vel dationis*).

The Holy Spirit is the rationale for giving (*ratio dandi*)⁹⁸. Through the gift of the Holy Spirit, all other gifts are given. In the natural order, the Holy Spirit is only the rationale for the giving. In the supernatural order, however, the Holy Spirit is both the *ratio dandi* and that which is given (*id quod datur*).

The Holy Spirit is the *ratio* since in the spirative act he is spirated by the Father and the Son not only as Love, but also as the principle of every other donation given to creatures. The Spirit as Love is the *ratio* of every gift not only in the sense of being the principle that moves the Father to give but also in the sense that the Father in spirating Love, spirates it as the *ratio dandi* of every effect *ad extra*.

The Father and the Son love creatures in the Spirit⁹⁹. To explain this, Aquinas distinguishes in *In I Sent.*, d. 10, a threefold love in God¹⁰⁰:

- [1] Essential love: does not refer to a procession or real relation, but only a relation of reason. Essential love is an act common to all three persons of the Trinity, yet is appropriated to the Holy Spirit.
- [2] Notional love: implies a real procession of love from the Lover. The Father and the Son spirate and the *terminus* of this spiration is the Holy Spirit.
- [3] Personal Love: this refers to the real subsisting relation that proceeds. The Holy Spirit proceeds as Love.

The Father and the Son spirate the Holy Spirit who is Love in person and who is the reason for every liberal gift made by God to his creatures.

The parallelism between the Son who proceeds as art and the Spirit who proceeds as the reason for every work of the will, shows the relation of the two Persons to the production of creatures: the imitation of divine nature and the free gift of the will. While creatures proceed from the divine will as a thing that is made and willed by

⁹⁷ THOMAS AQUINAS, *In I Sent.*, d. 18, q. 1, a. 2: "Quia igitur spiritus sanctus est amor, ex ratione suae processionis habet in se et quod detur, et quod sit ratio dandi: unde est donum per se, et primo; alia autem quae dantur non sunt dona nisi secundum quod participant aliquid amoris, ut ex amore data".

⁹⁸ F. MARINELLI, *Personalismo trinitario nella storia della salvezza*, 181-187.

⁹⁹ F. MARINELLI, *Personalismo trinitario nella storia della salvezza*, 188-203.

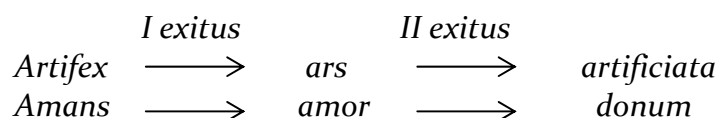
¹⁰⁰ THOMAS AQUINAS, *In I Sent.*, d. 10, q. 1, a. 1 ad 4:

the will, the Holy Spirit proceeds as the *ratio* of every work of the will. Likewise, the Son proceeds as the *art* of everything that is constituted by the divine intellect¹⁰¹.

Then, in *In I Sent.*, d. 32, Aquinas draws a parallel between the Art that proceeds from the Father and the Love that proceeds from the Father and the Son:

Just as there is a twofold process to be considered in the egression of the artifacts from art; namely, of the art itself from the artisan, which he discovers in his heart and secondly the process of the artifacts from the discovered art; so also in the process of the will, two things are to be considered; namely the *exitus* of love from the lover and second the *exitus* of the thing itself given out of love from love¹⁰².

Marinelli represents this as follows¹⁰³:



The Spirit is the first bond that unites the Father to the world. The Father possesses his personal way of loving and the proper object of his paternal love is the Son. It is in consequence of his admiration for the goodness of the beloved Son that the Father decides to produce creatures and to dialogue naturally and supernaturally with them as images of the Image. Thus, creatures are loved by God in the One who is love by the Father per se. This act of love is eternal. In the same act that generates the Son, the Father conceives in and through the Son, the ideas of things under the influence of the Spirit. But it is in the Spirit that the Father places in action his creative Word: in this way the Spirit becomes the first bond between the Father and the world.

* * *

In synthesis, Sacred Theology distinguishes between the productive causality (*efficientiae*) that is common to the essential action of the Trinity and the *rationale* of the efficient causality (*ratio efficientiae*), that discerns a foundation for the imitation of the divine nature in the procession of the Son as Word: “Speaking the Word is the model of the way that God communicates himself to creation”¹⁰⁴ and for the liberality of the divine gift in the procession of Love: “The Holy Spirit is the rationale of all that God communicates in the generosity of his love”¹⁰⁵. This is summarized by Emery as follows:

¹⁰¹ THOMAS AQUINAS, *In I Sent.*, d. 10, q. 1, a. 1 ad 3: “Creatura procedit a voluntate sicut res operata per voluntatem; sed spiritus sanctus sicut ratio cujuslibet operis voluntatis, sicut etiam filius producitur ut ars omnium eorum quae per intellectum divinum constituta sunt”.

¹⁰² THOMAS AQUINAS, *In I Sent.*, d. 32, q. 1, a. 3 ad 2: “Quod sicut in egressu artificiorum ab arte est considerare duplicem processum; scilicet ipsius artis ab artifice, quam de corde suo adinvenit; et secundo processum artificiorum ab ipsa arte inventa; ita etiam in processu voluntatis est duo considerare; scilicet exitum amoris ab amante, et secundo exitum ipsius rei datae per amorem ab amore.”

¹⁰³ F. MARINELLI, *Personalismo trinitario nella storia della salvezza*, 196.

¹⁰⁴ G. EMERY, *The Trinitarian Theology of St. Thomas Aquinas*, 345-346.

¹⁰⁵ G. EMERY, *The Trinitarian Theology of St. Thomas Aquinas*, 346.

Begotten by the Father, the Son is the model and source of this communication in which God confers a participation in the goods of nature upon creatures. Because he proceeds by a mode of intellect as the Word of the Father, the Word is the art by which the Father achieves his works of wisdom in the world: the Father creates through his Word. And likewise the Holy Spirit is the pattern and source of this communication in as much as it flows from God's love. Proceeding as the Love with which Father and Son love one another, the Holy Spirit is also the Love by which Father and Son communicate a participation in the divine goodness to creatures as an act of love¹⁰⁶.

3.2 The *reditus* of Creation to God

The influence of the begetting of the Son and the procession of the Holy Spirit extends to the Trinitarian structure of economy and the return of creatures to God:

In the same way that the procession of the persons is the rationale for the production of creatures by the first principle, so likewise the procession of the persons is the rationale of this return to the end; since, in the same way that we have been created through the Son and the Holy Spirit, so likewise it is through them that we are united to the ultimate end¹⁰⁷.

The return of creatures to God is presented by Aquinas according to the various modes of presence of God in creatures or according to the various modes of union of creatures to God. These modes of presence or union are fundamentally threefold: God is in all creatures according to likeness (*per potentiam, praesentiam et essentiam*), in holy men and women and holy angels by operation (*per gratiam*), and in Jesus Christ according to being (hypostatic union)¹⁰⁸. Only spiritual creatures are able to “touch” (*attingere*) God according to his substance. This union is accomplished by operation, by acts of knowledge and love that have God as their object. By grace we participate not only in God's goodness, but also in God's beatitude and this happens under the influence of the Trinitarian processions¹⁰⁹.

The perfection of a creature, as we have seen, does not consist merely in having been created or constituted in being, but principally in its union with its ultimate end¹¹⁰. In this life, grace brings about a unitive assimilation to God in man and is ordered to the final union of man to God in glory. Thus, grace is presented by Aquinas as a created, gratuitous, supernatural gift that is received in the soul that makes man deiform¹¹¹.

¹⁰⁶ G. EMERY, *The Trinitarian Theology of St. Thomas Aquinas*, 358.

¹⁰⁷ THOMAS AQUINAS, *In I Sent.*, d. 14, q. 2, a. 2. Quoted by G. EMERY, *The Trinitarian Theology of St. Thomas Aquinas*, 358.

¹⁰⁸ See THOMAS AQUINAS, *In I Sent.*, d. 37, q. 1, a. 2.

¹⁰⁹ See G. EMERY, *The Trinitarian Theology of St. Thomas Aquinas*, 358. See also THOMAS AQUINAS, *In IV Sent.*, d. 49, q. 1, a. 3 q1a. 1; see also *In II Sent.*, d. 1, q. 2, a. 2 ad 4.

¹¹⁰ See THOMAS AQUINAS, *In I Sent.*, d. 37, q. 2, a. 2: “Perfectio autem creaturae non statim habetur in suis principiis, quae imperfecta sunt, ut patet in materia et forma, quorum neutrum habet per se esse perfectum; sed in conjunctione ipsius creaturae ad suum finem.”

¹¹¹ See F. MARINELLI, *Personalismo trinitario nella storia della salvezza*, 236.

In the return of spiritual creatures to God, the influence of the divine processions is brought to bear in the gifts of grace and glory through which we adhere to the end¹¹². “Such are the ‘missions’, the ‘temporal processions of Son and Holy Spirit into the hearts of the saints: the persons *themselves* are given and ‘possessed in a new way, as leading to or uniting with the end’”¹¹³. Commenting on Aquinas, Marinelli situates the return of man to God as the scope of the divine missions¹¹⁴. Since we are united to God by grace, the theme of the return of rational creatures to God needs to deal with the relation between the divine missions, sanctifying grace and sacramental grace¹¹⁵. Marinelli also presents the notion of “enjoyment” (*fruitio*), since man reaches his ultimate end of union with God only in the supreme “*fruitio*”, man’s ultimate happiness. An imperfect enjoyment of God is possible *in via*, while the perfect enjoyment of God is possible *in Patria*¹¹⁶.

After establishing, the *fruitio Dei* as the ultimate end of man, Marinelli deals with how we enjoy each of the three divine persons: the three persons are one object of enjoyment (*In I Sent.*, d. 1, q. 2, a. 2) and we enjoy each of them in one act and not in three separate acts of enjoyment. This reflection opens up to the problem of how creatures relate to God¹¹⁷. Considered as principle, all creatures are related to the divine nature insofar as the creature is the common work of the three Persons. However, considered as *terminus*, the natural order has the divine nature as *terminus*, while the supernatural order has the Persons as *terminus*¹¹⁸.

Aquinas distinguishes the order of the missions insofar as the mission of the Holy Spirit leads to the Son, while that of the Son leads to the Father:

Just as the effect of the mission of the Son was to lead to the Father, so the effect of the mission of the Holy Spirit is to lead the faithful to the Son. Now the Son, since he is begotten Wisdom, is Truth itself: “I am the way, the truth, and the life” (John 14:6). And so the effect of this mission is to render men participants in the divine Wisdom and knowers of the truth. Since he is the Word, the Son gives us teaching; and the Holy Spirit makes us able to grasp it¹¹⁹.

¹¹² THOMAS AQUINAS, *In I Sent.*, d. 14, q. 2, a. 2.

¹¹³ G. EMERY, *The Trinitarian Theology of St. Thomas Aquinas*, 359.

¹¹⁴ See THOMAS AQUINAS, *In I Sent.*, d. 15, q. 5, a. 1 ad 3: “Quod missio pertinet ad reditum creaturae in finem”.

¹¹⁵ See F. MARINELLI, *Personalismo trinitario nella storia della salvezza*, 247-254.

¹¹⁶ See THOMAS AQUINAS, *In I Sent.*, d. 1, q. 4, a. 1 ad 5 and *In IV Sent.*, d. 49, q. 5, a. 2 sol. 1.

¹¹⁷ See THOMAS AQUINAS, *In I Sent.*, d. 30, q. 2: “Habitudo autem Dei ad creaturam potest designari dupliciter: vel secundum quod creatura refertur in ipsum sicut in principium; vel secundum quod creatura refertur in ipsum ut in terminum”.

¹¹⁸ See THOMAS AQUINAS, *In I Sent.*, d. 30, q. 2: “Si autem consideretur relatio creaturae ad creatorem ut ad terminum, possibile est quod talis relatio creaturae sit ad aliquid essenziale, vel ad aliquid personale”.

¹¹⁹ THOMAS AQUINAS, *In Ioan.*, 14, lect. 6, n. 1958: “Nam, sicut effectus missionis Filii fuit ducere ad Patrem, ita effectus missionis Spiritus Sancti est ducere fideles ad Filium. Filius autem, cum sit ipsa sapientia genita, est ipsa veritas; supra XIV, 6: ego sum via, veritas et vita. Et ideo effectus missionis huiusmodi est ut faciat homines participes divinae sapientiae, et cognitores veritatis. Filius ergo tradit nobis doctrinam, cum sit verbum; sed Spiritus Sanctus doctrinae eius nos capaces facit”.

3.2.1 The return of creatures and the Spirit

The temporal procession corresponds to the personal action of sanctifying the spiritual creature and leading it to the Father. In the temporal procession of the Spirit, the Spirit does not just give gifts, but rather is also given. So, on the one hand, the Holy Spirit is given along with his gifts; on the other, by means of the gifts of the Holy Spirit we are united to the Spirit¹²⁰. The person who receives the Holy Spirit's mission 'enjoys' the divine person himself¹²¹.

The visible mission of the Holy Spirit concerns Christ (manifestation as a dove at the Baptism in the Jordan and as in the cloud at the Transfiguration), the Apostles (Christ breathes the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles), and the primitive Church (as tongues of fire on the day of Pentecost).

Union with God occurs, in the procession of the Spirit, according to the very mode of proceeding of the Spirit, namely, by way of love. As Marinelli writes: "The created gift in which, with which and by means of which the Spirit proceeds, is given and is sent is the gift of charity"¹²². Here, Aquinas means that by means of the gift of love (common to the Trinity and appropriated to the Spirit) we are united to God according to the eternal mode of proceeding in God¹²³. The mission of the Spirit is both notional (with respect to its principle) and essential (with respect to the effect in the creature)¹²⁴.

By means of grace, the Spirit modifies and elevates the soul to a certain divine manner of being, so that the creature be made apt for and emit divine actions¹²⁵. This aptness for divine action is given to the creature by a true communication of the divine nature in the soul which becomes the principle of operation. The Holy Spirit prepares the sending of the Son. When the Son and the Father dwell in us, the Holy Spirit maintains us united in love because he is both the bond of love between Father and Son and between God and creation¹²⁶.

3.2.2 The return of creatures and the Word

Aquinas states that as the Holy Spirit proceeds invisibly in the mind by means of the gift of love, so does the Son, by means of the gift of wisdom¹²⁷. By means of the gifts of love and of wisdom, the very movement of the Word and the Spirit to the Father is received in the soul: in these gifts the Father is made present and is loved. This, then, is the fulfillment of the return to the Father: in the Son and through the Spirit¹²⁸.

¹²⁰ F. MARINELLI, *Personalismo trinitario nella storia della salvezza*, 303.

¹²¹ G. EMERY, *The Trinitarian Theology of St. Thomas Aquinas*, 375.

¹²² F. MARINELLI, *Personalismo Trinitario*, 279.

¹²³ F. MARINELLI, *Personalismo trinitario nella storia della salvezza*, 317.

¹²⁴ See THOMAS AQUINAS, *In I Sent.*, d. 15, q. 1, a. 2.

¹²⁵ See F. MARINELLI, *Personalismo trinitario nella storia della salvezza*, 358.

¹²⁶ See F. MARINELLI, *Personalismo trinitario nella storia della salvezza*, 359.

¹²⁷ THOMAS AQUINAS, *In I Sent.*, d. 15, q. 4, a. 1: "Unde sicut Spiritus Sanctus invisibiliter procedit in mentem per donum amoris, ita Filius per donum sapientiae."

¹²⁸ See F. MARINELLI, *Personalismo trinitario nella storia della salvezza*, 383.

The restoration of man to God is comprehended in the procession of the divine person and is said of their missions. The relation that belongs to a divine person is represented in the soul through grace:

Just as the mode through which the Holy Spirit is referred to the Father is love, so the proper mode of reference of the Son to the Father is to be the Word who manifests him. And this is why, just as the Holy Spirit proceeds invisibly in the spirit through the gift of love, so likewise the Son [proceeds in the spirit] through the gift of wisdom, and this manifests the Father himself, the ultimate end to which we return¹²⁹.

The Spirit impels our return to the Father through love; the Son gives us to return to the Father through wisdom. The Father is not sent, but the missions of the Son and the Holy Spirit culminate in him. The missions of the Son and the Holy Spirit present and disclose the Father¹³⁰. When we receive the gifts of wisdom and love, the divine persons are present in a way they had not been before. The gift of sanctifying grace enables us to know and love God and return to God himself.

The soul is said to participate in the intratrinitarian movements of the Spirit and the Word. In the Spirit, the soul participates in the love of the Father for the Son and of the Son for the Father; in the Word, the soul participates in the generation of the Word whereby the Father manifests himself¹³¹. In this way, the soul, in the processions-missions, participates in the intratrinitarian life, in the spiration of the Spirit and in the generation of the Word.

The Son and the Spirit are seen in relation to the Father: In the temporal procession of the Son, by the gift of wisdom, there is the manifestation of the Father himself. This invisible mission is made clear in the visible mission of the Incarnation: the Incarnate Word is the visible manifestation of the Father¹³².

The Word is central both in relation to the Spirit, insofar as the Word is *spirans Amorem*, and in relation to the Father, insofar as the Word is *manifestans Ipsum*. It is by participating in this relational duality that man, uniting himself to the Word, can discover in him the face of the Father and can find an adequate way to spirate a Love, worthy of the Father, crying out to the Father, by this Love which the Word gives him, with the expression proper to a Son who is in love: “Abba, Father”¹³³.

The missions of the Spirit and the Word are distinct both with regard to their *exitus* (generation of the Son; procession of the Spirit) and with regard to their effect according to which they are in the creature in a new way:

Similarly, the gift which perfects the intellect, namely, wisdom, according to which one considers the mission of the Son, is different from the gift which perfects the affection or will, according to which one considers the mission of the Holy Spirit¹³⁴.

¹²⁹ THOMAS Aquinas, *In I Sent.*, d. 15, q. 4, a. 1.

¹³⁰ See G. EMERY, *The Trinitarian Theology of St. Thomas Aquinas*, 377.

¹³¹ See F. MARINELLI, *Personalismo trinitario nella storia della salvezza*, 370.

¹³² See F. MARINELLI, *Personalismo trinitario nella storia della salvezza*, 383.

¹³³ See F. MARINELLI, *Personalismo trinitario nella storia della salvezza*, 383.

¹³⁴ THOMAS AQUINAS, *In I Sent.*, d. 15, q. 4, a. 2: “Similiter donum quod perficit intellectum, scilicet sapientia, secundum quod attenditur missio Filii, est aliud a dono quod perficit affectum vel voluntatem, secundum quod attenditur missio Spiritus Sancti”.

The two missions, although distinct, are always together: since love follows knowledge and perfect knowledge always leads to love¹³⁵. The missions are ordered to the ultimate end of man: *coniungere Deo*. The effects of each mission, however, differ according to the two faculties of the rational creature, with which man is united to God, namely, intellect and will (*affectus*)¹³⁶.

The Word of God was sent visibly to effect the return of man to God. Aquinas states that by means of the advent of Christ the obstacle of the ancient condemnation was removed and in this way the entire human race was prepared to receive grace. Aquinas highlights the redemptive and revelatory aspects of this visible mission: the absolution of the price of redemption and the victory over the devil; the doctrine Christ clearly taught about divine things¹³⁷. Christ's Paschal mystery reveals the depth of God's love:

Christ's Paschal mystery reveals to humankind the extraordinary depth of God's love. Without Christ's passion, humankind would not have known the superabundance of God's love. The Paschal mystery reveals the Trinity (God-in-himself) in terms of a wisdom of wondrous love, to the point of the Son of God giving his own life for the salvation of sinners, that is, for the salvation of those who by pride had cut themselves off from God¹³⁸.

Christ's passion reveals God's wisdom and love and is a manifestation of the Son's obedience to the Father through the Holy Spirit:

In suffering innocently for the sins of all others, [Christ] he knew fully the glorious love of the Father that the sinner rejects; in this way, his perfect knowledge of the father enabled him to suffer, out of love, immeasurably profound pangs of sorrow for sins. The Father inspired Christ's human will with this perfect charity by infusing Christ's humanity with the fullness of the grace of the Holy Spirit¹³⁹.

For Aquinas, the Paschal mystery manifests the Father as the one who sends the Son: "If the Father's begetting of the Son is characterized by this absolute self-giving, then if Christ is to make the Father known, he will have to do so by giving himself. Aquinas repeatedly affirms that manifesting the Father, making him known, is the task of the incarnate Son"¹⁴⁰. Obedient love gives access to the Father: "When we come to understand Christ's love, manifested on the Cross, he reveals for us the Father's love –

¹³⁵ See THOMAS AQUINAS, *In I Sent.*, d. 15, q. 4, a. 2: "Una missio nunquam est sine alia; quia amor sequitur notitiam; notitia perfecta, secundum quam est missio Filii, semper inducit in amorem, et ideo simul infunduntur et simul augmentantur."

¹³⁶ See THOMAS AQUINAS, *In I Sent.*, d. 15, q. 4, a. 2 ad 5: "Utraque missio ordinatur ad finem unum ultimum, scilicet coniungere Deo; sed effectus utriusque missionis differt secundum duo quae inveniuntur in rationali creatura, quibus Deo coniungitur, scilicet intellectus et affectus."

¹³⁷ See THOMAS AQUINAS, *In I Sent.*, d. 15, q. 5, a. 2: "Dicendum igitur, quod quia per adventum christi remotum est obstaculum antiquae damnationis, totum humanum genus effectum est paratius ad perceptionem gratiae quam ante: tum propter solutionem pretii, et victoriam diaboli; tum etiam propter doctrinam christi, per quam clarius nobis innotescunt divina".

¹³⁸ M. LEVERING, *Scripture and Metaphysics: Aquinas and the Renewal of Trinitarian Theology*, Blackwell Publishing, Malden 2004, 134.

¹³⁹ M. LEVERING, *Scripture and Metaphysics*, 136.

¹⁴⁰ M. LEVERING, *Scripture and Metaphysics*, 138.

the love expressed (as we have seen) as the absolute self-giving that begets the Son, the Father's Word or Image"¹⁴¹. We learn by Christ's passion and resurrection who God is:

By suffering on the Cross, Christ obediently does the Father's will; he abides in the Father's love. This love is manifested by Christ, through his human act of supreme suffering, as supreme self-giving. By his resurrection, Christ, as man, reveals the fruit (the glory) of this supreme self-giving; the fruit is the glory of friendship with the Father, since love loves its like. When we are conformed to his (self-giving) image, we manifest his glory and are glorified with him¹⁴².

Through his self-giving, Christ reveals the Father who draws all things to himself in the self-giving communion of Love. The Word is the one who discloses and reveals the Father. The Word is the one who manifests God *ad extra*, and man knows God to the degree that they participate in the Word¹⁴³.

Conclusion

As we have seen, metaphysics comes to bear on dogmatic theology in several areas: the procession as analogous to intellectual and volitional immanent action; the metaphysics of relation, which distinguishes the *ratio* of relation from *esse*; the relationship between *suppositum* and nature in the analogical predication of person of humans, angels and God; the distinction between essential properties and personal properties; the distinction between essential action and notional action; etc...

Metaphysics, as *Fides et ratio* teaches, seeks to offer a comprehensive vision of reality and man's place in the world. It argues that God's creative action is intellectual and volitional. Now, man, because of his rational, spiritual nature, has the possibility of returning to God in a way different from other non-rational, natural beings. Philosophy cannot demonstrate the gratuitous bestowal of grace. It can only affirm, on the one hand, the natural order of man to behold the divine essence, and, on the other, the impossibility that man achieves this by his own power.

The outline of the *exitus* and *reditus* of creation in philosophy is elevated to a higher, theological wisdom, which shows how things proceed from God through the Word (as *ars Patris*) and in the Spirit (as *amor*). Things return to God in Love and through the Word. The Spirit, through grace, impels man to the Son and Father through charity. The Word, through grace, brings man to Father, revealing to him the Wisdom of the Father and God's love for the creature.

¹⁴¹ M. LEVERING, *Scripture and Metaphysics*, 141.

¹⁴² M. LEVERING, *Scripture and Metaphysics*, 142.

¹⁴³ THOMAS AQUINAS, *In Ioan.*, cap. 17, lect. 6, n. 2267-2268: "Radix autem et fons cognitionis Dei est Verbum Dei, scilicet christus; eccli. c. 1, 5: 'Fons sapientiae Verbum Dei in excelsis'. Humana autem sapientia in Dei cognitione consistit. Haec autem cognitio ad homines derivatur a Verbo; quia in quantum homines participant Verbum Dei, intantum Deum cognoscunt. [...] Ex hac autem cognitione Verbi, quae est fons et radix, derivantur, sicut rivuli et rami, omnes cognitiones fidelium".